



October 2020

Lessons Learned from Service in India: Preparation

debra v. craighead

Univ of LA Monroe, craighead@ulm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.ulm.edu/ojihp>



Part of the [Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

craighead, d. v. (2020). Lessons Learned from Service in India: Preparation. *Online Journal of Interprofessional Health Promotion*, 2(2). Retrieved from <https://repository.ulm.edu/ojihp/vol2/iss2/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ULM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Online Journal of Interprofessional Health Promotion by an authorized editor of ULM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact lowe@ulm.edu.

Lessons Learned from Service in India: Preparation

Cover Page Footnote

The author would like to thank Dr. Rebekah Naylor, Dr. Shelby Garner, Dr. Lyn Prater and Ms. Leena Raj for patiently sharing their expertise and passion for India with me.

Type of article: Brief

Title: Lessons Learned from Service in India: Preparation

This is part 1 of a 3-part series.

Abstract: Health professionals prepare for international service to promote global health and learn from the populations they serve. Service is needed for United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) achievement. The 17 SDGs and 169 related targets aim "to create a world of safety and inclusion by promoting multisector partnerships within and between nations" (Rosa & Iro, 2019, p. 623). Assistance from colleagues, reputable resources and national and international organizations are beneficial to assist nurses and allied health professionals to prepare for global service. In order to build global health capacity and achieve the SDGs, all health care disciplines should seek to collaborate and learn from others around the globe. This paper will describe the preparation one faculty of nursing undertook to teach nursing students in India.

Key words: global health, service, preparation, India

While attending a lecture for healthcare professionals a decade ago, my global service passion was awakened. As Dr. Rebekah Naylor, missionary surgeon, recounted her life's service in south India, her story captivated me (Hornbeck, 2008). She asked attendees to consider serving as volunteer healthcare professionals and teachers in India. Her bold invitation was intriguing, yet I doubted I could serve due to family and work responsibilities and cultural unfamiliarity. Nearly a decade later, I received another appeal from the Baptist Relief Organization for nurse faculty volunteers sent on Dr. Naylor's behalf. Faculty illness, pregnancies, and India's new six-month paid maternity leave mandate (India Briefing, 2018) resulted in a dire need for faculty volunteers. At that point, I was ready to pursue my global service passion.

I was invited to serve the Rebekah Ann Naylor School of Nursing (RANSON) as a Guest Lecturer for two programs; a diploma program in general nursing and midwifery with 118 students and a bachelor's degree program with 133 students. The school is located in Bangalore, India and has a well established partnership with The Baylor University Louise Herring School of Nursing promoting nurse and nurse midwifery capacity building (Spies, et al., 2017). RANSON is a part of Bangalore Baptist Hospital, a 340-bed acute care facility. The school's Principal, Ms. Raj, communicated the school's objective was to "give high quality nursing education to young women from a section of the society which is economically deprived and to provide opportunity for a career and a profession" (L. Raj, personal communication, February 28, 2018). I agreed to perform two months of volunteer service and assume all travel expenses. Dorm-style housing and ground transportation to and from the airport would be provided. My passion was quickly becoming a reality.

Preparation for Service

Although an experienced nursing professor in the U.S., I had to learn about international travel and teaching nursing in India. My work and teaching experience were pediatric-focused, and my doctoral degree focused on improving health within the context of culture. While unsure how to proceed, I excitedly informed my co-workers and friends about my decision to pursue this service opportunity.

Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framed my view of my global health experience (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [UNSDG], n.d.). These 17 global goals set by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015 are part of Resolution 70/1 of the *UN's Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UNSDG, n.d.). Thirteen of the 17 goals relate to health and five of the goals relate to the healthcare workforce. The five healthcare workforce goals include Goal 3 *good health and well-being*, Goal 4 *quality education*, Goal 5 *gender equality*, Goal 8 *decent work and economic growth*, and Goal 10 *reduced inequalities* (UNSDG, n.d.). Action opportunities for healthcare and life science professionals include sharing expertise to strengthen health systems, developing innovative low cost preventative and curative treatments, educating communities on healthy lifestyles, and creating opportunities for lower paid workers to develop skills to gain access to improved employment opportunities (UN Global Compact and SKPMG, 2017).

South Asia faces challenges to achieving the SDGs overall, however they have had success in reducing poverty (The World Bank in India, 2019). Poor SDG achievement performance by South Asia can be explained by India's heterogeneous states (Chhabra, 2019).

Nurses, as well as allied health professionals can learn more about the SDGs and the impact on health and healthcare. Specifically, health professionals can work to promote gender equality and empowerment of women locally and globally (Hawkins, 2020). Dalmida et al. (2016) concluded volunteer service “should consider the types of service engagement, as well as the design of projects to include collaboration, bi-directionality, sustainability, equitable partnerships, and inclusion of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.” (Dalmida et al., 2016, pg. 524).

Discovering India

I used the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) World Fact Book to learn about South Asia (CIA, n.d.). India is the home to nearly 1.3 billion people (CIA, n.d.). Its civilization is one of the world’s oldest, dating back to the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C. During the 4th to 6th centuries A.D., art, literature and culture flourished in India. By the 16th century, European explorers began to establish themselves in the country, and by the 19th century, Great Britain governed India and considered it to be the “Jewel in the Crown” of the British Empire. Mohandas Gandhi led nonviolent resistance to British rule which eventually resulted in India’s independence in 1947 and the partitioning of two separate states; India and Pakistan (CIA, n.d.).

Problems facing India today include environmental degradation, extensive poverty, and corruption (CIA, n.d.). Yet, India is an emerging economic power due to economic reforms, its young population, and its strategic geographic location. India faces environmental issues such as deforestation, air pollution, and unclean water (CIA, n.d.). Over 20 spoken languages makes communicating a challenge for healthcare workers. Large segments of the population are

educated and speak English, which is the language used for national, political, financial and educational communication.

The religions groups found in India include: Hindu (79.8%), Muslim (14.2%), Christian (2.3%), and Sikh (1.7%). Common law is based on the English model but there are different personal laws for Hindus, Christians, and Muslims (CIA, n.d.). India has a history of gender discrimination against women and overall poor quality education (CIA, n.d.). The country has the second highest number of cellular telephone subscriptions (91/100 people) and is one of the fastest growing telecom markets in the world (CIA, n.d.).

International Travel Preparation

A colleague recommended the U.S. Department of State Travel international travel webpage for reputable information about travel to India (U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs [USDS], 2018). The website provided country specific facts such as passport and tourist visa requirements, endemic health risks, needed immunizations, and health insurance information. As suggested by the USDS, I enrolled in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), a free program for U.S. citizens providing travel alerts, safety information, and emergency communication, as needed (USDS, 2018).

A tourist visa is required to visit India. The online application process is tedious, and a fee of \$65.00 is required. Information about a traveler's parents, including birth certificate information, is required. I applied for a 60-day tourist visa. Visas require that a person's travel return date (exit the country) is within the designated timeframe parameters.

A literature search returned two articles published by nursing faculty who teach at the location I was to serve in. (Spies et al., 2015; Spies et al., 2017). Personal contact was made with

two co-authors who generously shared detailed service enhancement information. Developing mutually beneficial relationships, making strategic investments of time and finances, developing cultural humility, flexibility, and reflecting on practice were identified by the authors as necessary components for successful global service (Spies et al., 2015). Performing service, research, teaching/scholarship and study abroad programs are identified as activities that build global capacity (Spies et al., 2017). Spies et al. (2015) indicated that intentional focus and incorporation of these elements would lead to a positive service experience.

Finally, I explored principles to guide my teaching within a global context. The National League for Nursing's Faculty Preparation for Global Experiences Toolkit provided evidence-based information to promote faculty awareness and preparation for international service (National League for Nursing [NLN], n.d.). The toolkit asserts that successful service requires identifying potential challenges and assessing preparedness for global service learning experience. In addition, the toolkit offered considerations prior to travel, pre-departure preparations, host country arrival recommendations, and reflection and debriefing upon service completion. The toolkit is intended for nurse educators who are considering global service, but it is suitable for other healthcare disciplines

Ethics for Global Service

Professional ethics for global service are provided by national and international organizations. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) Code of Ethics for Nurses guided my daily service activities. According to the ICN (2012), the four elements delineating the standards of ethical conduct for nurses are:

- People-respecting human rights, values, customs, beliefs

- Practice-maintaining competency, accountability, personal health and conduct
- Profession-upholding practice and educational standards
- Coworkers-sustaining collaborative and respectful relationships with global faculty

Internalizing these four elements and striving to treat all people with dignity and esteem within relationships and teaching resulted in a positive volunteer experience. In 2019, the American Nurses Association (ANA) published a position statement entitled *Ethical Considerations for Local and Global Volunteerism* (ANA, 2019). Recommendations for nurse volunteers include performing work within the professional's scope of practice regardless of location or activity purpose, complying with license and practice regulations in the host country, and seeking long-term mutually beneficial relationships (ANA, 2019). This position statement recommends that all nurse volunteers perform activities in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Nurses (2015) and the ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses (2012), which codify the nurse's role in compassionate, culturally sensitive care.

Conclusion

India is the world's largest democracy and the second most populous nation second only to China (The World Bank in India, 2019). Serving as a volunteer faculty in India was life-changing and the highlight of my 37-year nursing career. Nurses and allied health professionals who serve globally may renew a passion for their profession while learning from and improving the lives of those they serve.

References

American Nurses Association. (2015). *Code of ethics for nurses with interpretive statements*.

<https://www.nursingworld.org/coe-view-only>

American Nurses Association. (2019). *Position statement: Ethical considerations for local and global volunteerism*.

https://www.nursingworld.org/~4a346d/globalassets/practiceandpolicy/nursing-excellence/ana-position-statements/social-causes-and-health-care/ethical-considerations-for-local-and-global-volunteerism_final_nursingworld.pdf

Central Intelligence Agency. (n.d.). *The World Fact Book: South Asia India*.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>

Chhabra, S. (2019). *Healthy states progressive India: Report on the ranks of states and union territories (English)*. [https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-](https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/521321588828826162/healthy-states-progressive-india-report-on-the-ranks-of-states-and-union-territories)

[reports/documentdetail/521321588828826162/healthy-states-progressive-india-report-on-the-ranks-of-states-and-union-territories](https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/521321588828826162/healthy-states-progressive-india-report-on-the-ranks-of-states-and-union-territories)

Dalmida, S. G., Amerson, R., Foster, J., McWhinney-Dehany, L., Magowe, M., Nicholas, P. K.,

Perhson, K. & Leffers, J. (2016). Volunteer service and service learning: Opportunities, partnerships, and United Nations Millennium Development Goals. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 48(5), 517-526.

Hawkins, J. (2020, June 3). Think “glocal”: Advancing the sustainable development goals during stay at home orders. *Reflections on Nursing Leadership*.

<https://www.reflectionsonnursingleadership.org/features/more-features/advancing-sustainable-development-goals-at-home>

Hornbeck, C. (2008). *Rebekah Ann Naylor, M.D. missionary surgeon in changing times*.
Lightening Source.

India Briefing. (2018). *Maternity leave in India: The law and benefits*. <https://www.india-briefing.com/news/maternity-leave-india-law-benefits-10294.html/>

International Council of Nurses. (2012). *Code of ethics for nurses*.
https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/inline-files/2012_ICN_Codeofethicsfornurses_%20eng.pdf

National League for Nursing Toolkits. (n.d.) *Faculty preparation for global experiences toolkit*.
<http://www.nln.org/professional-development-programs/teaching-resources/toolkits>

Raj, L. personal communication, February 28, 2018

Rosa, W, & Iro, E. (2019). The future of nursing and the advancement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. *Nursing Outlook*, 67, 623-625.

Spies, L., Garner, S., Prater, L. & Riley, C. (2015). Building global nurse capacity through relationships, education, and collaboration. *Nurse Education Today*, 35(5), 653-656.

Spies, L. Garner, S., Faucher, M., Hastings-Tolsma, M., Riley, C., Millenbruch, J., Prater, L. & Conroy, S. (2017). A model for upscaling global partnerships and building nurse and midwifery capacity. *International Nursing Review* 64,331-344.

The World Bank. (2019). *The World Bank in India*.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/overview>

United Nations Global Compact and KPMG International. (2017). *The SDG industry matrix for healthcare and life sciences* <https://home.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2017/05/sdg-healthcare-life-science.pdf>

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. (n.d.). Retrieved on June 2, 2020

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

United States Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs. (2018, December). *Republic of*

India. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country->

[Information-Pages/India.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/India.html)

Helpful Guidance for International Service:

- Frame your service using global initiatives
- Discover all you can about the destination
- Use reputable resources for international travel preparation and cultural norms
- Know and adhere to professional code(s) of ethics